

THE Practical Method

Of Conveyance of
LETTERS, Returns of Answers, Replies, &c.
the same day within the Weekly Bills of Mortality;

Commonly called, The

PENNY-POST.

*Published for Plain Direction to all Persons, for the better Maintainance
of Mutual Correspondence, being the Life of Trade and Business.*



Hereas *William Dockwra* of London Merchant, and his Partners, have contrived and carried on for above two years past, the Publick and Useful Undertaking above-mentioned; by which means a very frequent, safe, cheap, and mutual Correspondence is maintained; to the great benefit of Trade and Commerce, which is of general Concernment, but of great Expence to the Undertakers to this day.

Yet have they met with many Oppositions and Discouragements, and have been long vexed with unreasonable and very expensive Law-suits, and have lately had new Actions of Ten thousand pounds a-piece brought against them by way of Penalties said to be forfeited by the Statutes of 12 & 15 Car. II. that erects *The General Post-Office*, and gives to his Royal Highness that Princely Revenue; alledging that the Penny-Post is a prejudice to his General Post-Office, when all Mankind (that are ingenuous and impartial) are convinced that 'tis as well a great Improvement thereof, as 'tis a manifest good to all the Inhabitants of London and places adjacent: And those Acts of Parliament were intended for the benefit of the Subject, in providing them all possible conveniency in their Trade and Commerce; which Publick Good, that this Invention of the Penny-Post does greatly promote, is most evident, by improving Mutual Correspondence, the Soul of Trade and Business, which was the chief Design and true intent of the Law-makers. And therefore it cannot be imagined so great and generous a Prince as His Royal Highness, should be pleased with the suppressing this great Benefit, to the people; which will also tend to the ruin of the Undertakers, who have already expended some Thousands of pounds more than ever they received; besides their great pains and loss of so much time in the Managing this Publick Concern.

Now forasmuch as there is a Trial at Bar appointed this *Michaelmas Term* to decide this Cause, the Undertakers cannot doubt of being delivered from the hardships they groan under, when the true Merits of the Cause shall be thoroughly understood on a fair Hearing, by an honest understanding English Jury, and by the learned, upright and honourable Judges. And they hope that God in his providence will so bless the good intentions of the Undertakers with the peaceable Enjoyment of their own Chargeable Invention, that they may find encouragement for their real Service to the Publick: *Innocency* and *Integrity* being naturally confident of a *Reward*.

And therefore the subsequent lines (reducing the Penny-Post to practice) are published for the good of all: *Viz.*

1. That the Penny-Post conveys Letters, and Parcels that exceed not a Pound weight, or ten Pounds in value, for a Penny a piece, from any one place to another often-times in the same day, in London, Westminster, Southwark, Ratliff, and the contiguous Buildings of the weekly Bills of Mortality; every day except Sundays, Christmas-day and the three days next following, Munday and Tuesday in Easter-week, the like in Whitsun-week, the 30th. of January, and the 2. of September. But beyond the weekly Bills of Mortality, it doth not go, nor never did.

2. For the conveniency of all, the Undertakers have appointed some hundreds of Shop-keepers and noted Coffee-houses about Town, called Penny-post-houses, for receipt of such Letters as any one would send, where Messengers appointed for that purpose call hourly to fetch away whatsoever is there left. But the Undertakers pretend not to such quick dispatch in their carriage of Letters, as may be made by a special Messenger sent on purpose (as many by mistake have supposed) their Methods of Conveyance not permitting a quicker dispatch from one end of the Town to the other, than three or four hours, and at a shorter distance two or three hours, accounting from the time that the Letter is put into the Post.

Penny-post-house. But observe, that a Letter left just before the Messenger calls, will be delivered as directed, an hour sooner than one left just after he has called; for that must lie an hour longer before 'tis fetched away. Letters left at any *Penny-post-house*, within the contiguous Buildings, before 6 in the Evening, will certainly be conveyed to all places in Town the same Night; and those left before 7 in the Evening, will be conveyed to most places also: but for such as are left betwixt 7 and 8 at Night, altho many of them may be conveyed likewise as directed the same Night, yet some of them will lie in the hands of the *Penny-Post*, as also all that are left after 8, and not be delivered till next Morning: for tho they may be fetched away from the Receiving-house, by the Messenger that goes betwixt 9 and 10 on Post-nights to fetch the *General-Post* Letters; yet will they lie in the hands of the *Penny-Post* all Night.

3. A *Penny* (ready changed) must be left with every Letter or Parcel, when put into the *Penny-Post-house*, and nothing will be demanded or taken, if offered, by the Messenger that delivers it, *Penny-Post paid* being stamp't on every Letter and Parcel, according to the Triangular Form on the front of this Sheet.

4. Altho the Undertakers do warrant the safe Conveyance of any Parcel that exceeds not Ten Pounds in value, yet will they not be obliged to give Satisfaction for any things that are inclosed, unless well wrapp'd up either in strong Paper, or otherwise securely inclosed, and fast sealed up with hard Wax, under the Impression of some remarkable Seal (not a Thimble, a Piece of Money, &c.) In such sort, that what is inclosed therein may not drop out, no nor so much as be exposed to view, without breaking open either the Seal or Wrapper; and if wrapt up in Paper and ty'd, the ends be sealed as well as the middle, without which such parcels are seldom secure: because otherwise, either the person that brings it to the *Penny-Post-house*, or the person to whom the *Penny-Post* Messenger delivers it in the absence of the Party whom 'tis for, may open the Parcel and take out part of what is inclosed, wrapping it up again, and so deliver it, and yet the *Penny-Post* be chargeable therewith; and the true Value also indorsed in Words at length, and not in Figures. Nor will they make Satisfaction for the breaking of Glass-bottles, or other brittle things in the Carriage, or for wetting or spoiling any other thing that is subject to Damage in the Conveyance; it being unreasonable, that for a *Penny* a-piece they should convey things so troublesome and hazardous in the Carriage, and yet be liable to pay the Damage of breaking or spoiling into the Bargain: but if such things are sent, they shall be conveyed as free from Damage, as the crouding them in a Bag amongst Letters and other Parcels can well admit. But altho the Undertakers have published, that they will carry Parcels not exceeding a Pound Weight; yet 'twas never intended by them to convey Parcels of very great Bulk (tho under a Pound Weight) such as great Band-boxes, and other bulky Luggage which is daily imposed upon them; it being impractical for the *Penny-Post* to convey such Parcels, a few whereof make a Burthen.

5. For the convenience of such as send Letters to the *Post-Office-general* in *Lombard-street*, the Messengers do call at the *Penny-Post-houses* betwixt 9 and 10 within the contiguous Buildings every Post-night, to fetch away the Post Letters. And whereas miscarriages have many times happen'd, of such Letters as have been intrusted to Bell-men, and other obscure persons (not employed by the *General-Post*) to convey to the *Post-office* in *Lombard-street*, and consequently the persons concerned have met with great disappointments: all Letters conveyed thither by the *Penny-Post*, are Registered at the chief Office in *Lincoln-street*, the Clerks that so registers and conveys them being ready to attest upon Oath, the safe delivery of every Letter. But such as come inclosed in Covers, and directed to the *Post-office-general* in *Lombard-street*, cannot be Registered, because inclosed, and consequently the Delivery of them cannot be attested on Oath.

Note, That the Undertakers, to support this useful Design of conveying Letters and Parcels for a Penny a piece, being out of Purse some thousands of Pounds to accommodate the Publick; and the Benefit of Town-Letters coming short of a Reimbursement, much more of a Recompence for their Pains, Trouble and Hazard: 'Tis hoped, that all persons who pay for carrying their Letters to *Lombard-street*, will send them thither by the *Penny-Post*, the better to enable the Undertakers to uphold and continue on foot, this chargeable Design of sending Letters to and fro here in Town. And such as do send money to pay for the Postage of Letters into the Countrey, are desired to indorse how much they send.

As 'tis the Pravity of Man's Corrupt Nature to find fault, so has the *Penny-Post* but too too much been made the subject matter thereof; causeless Complaints being frequently made, to the prejudice of the Undertaking.

Complaints are of Two Kinds.

1. Delays of Letters, lying long before they come to hand.
2. Miscarriage of them, never coming to hand at all.

Delays of Letters happen, 1. Either before they are put into the hands of the *Penny-Post*. 2. Whilst in the hands of the *Penny-Post*. Or, 3. After the *Penny-Post* has delivered them.

1. By sending them to the *Penny-Post-house* by the hand of a Servant, Child, or some other heedless person, who carelessly delay the Letters some hours, or it may be days before they are put in. Also, oft-times Porters, who are sent as special Messengers with Letters, having through drunkenness or other hinderances delayed them so long in hand, that they are ashamed to deliver them themselves; sometimes on purpose to scandalize the Undertaking (to which they have so great a prejudice) do detain Letters long in hand; and then put them into the *Penny-Post*.

2. Delays are occasioned very often, by means of bad *Directions*; sometimes directing to a *Street*, of which there are divers of the same name, without mentioning in what part of the *Town* the *Street* lies; and consequently, the *Letter* to st up and down from one part of the *Town* to the other, before the right *Street* be found out. Sometimes directing to one *Sign* for another, nay sometimes directing to one *Street* for another, and very often the *Direction* so bad, as not possible to be read or understood; sometimes directing to such a person in such a *Street*, without mentioning *Christian-Name*, *Trade*, *Sign*, or in what part of the *Street*, and whether *Houſe-keeper*, *Lodger* or *Servant*; by which means, there being divers of one *Name* in a *Street*, and no distinction which of them the *Letter* is for: 'tis delivered, it may be, into all their hands one after another, and broke open to boot, without which neither of them could tell whether 'twas for them or not. Many *Letters* having thus been opened, and none of those into whose hands they come, owning them, they are in course returned to the *Penny-post-house*: and many others through careles and slight sealing, in the very carriage among other *Letters* in the *Bag*, have opened of themselves; from whence, the *Adversaries* of the *Penny-Post* have taken occasion to spread a *Scandal* on the management thereof, in that very particular, wherein the *Undertakers* are most sacredly careful to discharge the *Trust* reposed in them, as being sensible 'tis highly their interest so to do.

3. Delays often happen, after the *Penny-Post* Messengers have made a true delivery: for the person to whom the *Letter* is directed being not in the way when the Messenger comes with it, 'tis left with some one of the *Houſe*, who too often, through careles neglect, layes the *Letter* by, and so forgets to deliver it till it may be some hours, or sometimes a day or more after 'tis so left; and then to excuse their own neglect, pretend that 'tis but just then come to hand, whereupon the *Penny-Post* is instantly clamoured against, as the Author of the delay. This being so great and growing a mischief, the *Undertakers* thought it worth their while to be at the charge of detecting it, the better to distinguish these Neglects, from those of their own Messengers. To which end, the hour of the day at which the *Letter* is sent out for delivery, is stamp on the back-side thereof, *Mor.* for Morning, *Af.* for Afternoon in the form of the Stamps on the Title Page of this Paper; whereby may readily be discovered, at or very near what time of the day the *Penny-Post* Messenger brought it. For if he performs his duty as he ought, the *Letter* will for the most part be delivered within half an hour or an hour, but never exceeds an hour and a half after 'tis so stampt.

Moreover, if any *Parcels* are put into the *Penny-Post*, and not very fast made up, and sealed with some remarkable Impression for security; they will be left at the *Penny-Post-house* some dayes, before fetcht away, purposely to oblige all that send such things for the future, to inclose them as they ought to be.

Miscarriages also happen, either, 1. before the *Letters* are put into the hands of the *Penny-Post*. 2. Whilst in the hands of the *Penny-Post*. Or, 3. after the delivery of them.

1. By sending the *Letter* to the *Penny-Post-house* by some brutish *Servant*, or else by some silly *Child*, who for the sake of the *Farthings*, destroy the *Letter*.

2. The miscarriages of *Letters* sometimes happen whilst in the hands of the *Penny-Post*; yet never by their neglect, but either by means of such ill-written *Superſcriptions* as are not to be read, or such imperfect *Directions* by which the person is not to be found, or else the *Party* dead, or gone not known whither; and no body will take it in; and not seldom the person to whom 'tis directed, knowing (by the hand) that it comes from some one he cares not to hear from, will not receive it from the hands of the *Penny-Post* Messenger, but rejects it. In all such cases, the *Letters* are ever returned to the chief *Penny-Post-house* in *Lincoln-street*, where the *Parties* concerned may find them. And for the more clear conviction of those that write such very bad *Directions*, many Hundreds of such *Letters* lie at the said chief *Penny-Post-house* in *Lincoln-street*, as standing Records, testifying that the Writers of those *Letters*, and not the *Penny-Post*, are only chargeable with the Miscarriages of them, it being impossible to deliver them.

3. Miscarriages sometimes happen by means of some careles *Servant*, or other negligent person, who in the absence of the *Party* whom the *Letter* is for, receiving it from the hands of the *Penny-Post* Messenger, laies it by, and quite forgets the *Letter* or the place where 'twas laid, and so it is lost; or else, if after it has lain by a day or two, it be recalled to mind, yet this negligent person being ashamed (after so long a delay) to produce it, commits a second evil to prevent a detection of the first, and so destroys it.

Letters, tho really delivered, are yet sometimes said to miscarry, because no *Answers* are returned. But the reason why *Answers* come not, are manifold: 1. It very often happens, that the *Party* written to will not take the trouble of writing an *Answer*, tho the *Party* who sent the *Letter* expects it. 2. When a *Letter* imports a *Dunn* for *Money*, and the person so indebted either not able or willing to pay, not only returns no *Answer*, but when afterwards charged therewith, even denies the very receipt of such *Letter*, as has been often detected for justification of the *Penny-Post*: Or when a *Letter* is sent to require any thing to be done, that the person so sent to, cannot or will not perform, and yet in prudence not absolutely deny the doing of it, either pretends the *Letter* came too late, or else confidently disowns the receipt of any such at all, tho in truth he had it in due time. And thus disingenuously do too many traduce the *Penny-Post* with pretended Delays and Miscarriages, only to cloak thir own ill Principles and Practices.

Notwithstanding Delays and Miscarriages are thus occasioned, yet is the *Penny-Post* presently censured, as the Author of them, to the great detriment of the Undertaking: which to prevent, 'tis desired that all who find themselves so disappointed in their Correspondencies, would aswell out of justice to the Undertakers, as for their own satisfaction, first examine well whether their *Letters* were not false dated, or the *Superſcriptions* not to be read, or else the *Directions* faulty. Moreover, whether there was no neglect in the person that carried them to the *Penny-Post-house*, or in the person to whom the *Penny-Post* messenger delivered them; or whether the *Party* to whom directed, might not out of design disown the receipt: and if after all it appear, that none of them are in the fault, then, and not before, ought the *Penny-Post* to be censured.

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And thus, upon a strict enquiry, will the Clamours that are daily made of the Delays and Miscarriages of the Penny-Post, be found to be without any just ground. Nor indeed is it the interest of any one that finds himself accommodated by the Penny-Post, to permit a Complaint of Delay or Miscarriage to reach the ear of any other than the Parties concerned, or the Undertakers, in order to detect and redress it. For, since the Undertaking must either stand or fall, by the good or ill Opinion the World has of it, how imprudent then is it for any one that finds a Benefit thereby, by open Clamours to bereave it of that Reputation, that can only support it for his own Advantage; every Complaint that reaches the Ears of the Vulgar, being as a Dagger to stab its Reputation to the very heart. Besides; open Clamours can never repair such Parties damage (if any he has sustained) but on the contrary, may prove hurtful to himself, by discouraging others from sending by this Conveyance, and consequently by depriving it of a Support, even ruin the Undertaking, which otherwise would daily more and more improve, to the unspeakable benefit and advantage of himself, as well as of the Publick.

Note, All Persons, in their Supercriptions of Letters, are desired to write the Christian Names, Sign, Trade or Profession (if any) and in what part of the Street, or near what noted Lane, Court, Alley, Church, Tavern; &c. Also with heed and care to write the Name of the Person and Street very legible, and the Street to be written by itself at the bottom; and if the Party be a Lodger, to say, Lodging at such a House; if a Servant, to say, at his or her Masters House, to denote whether Lodger or Servant. All which is so essentially necessary for the more ready Delivery of Letters, that the doing thereof can never sufficiently be inculcated. 'Tis therefore expected, that all Persons, as well for their own, as the Undertakers convenience, would write the Directions so plain and intelligible, as easily to be read, and readily delivered.

There shall now be hinted some of the Conveniencies of this Useful Undertaking of the PENNY-POST.

All Gentlemen, Countrey-Chapmen, &c. can presently give Notice of their Arrival to Town.

Shop-keepers and Trades-men send for what they want to their Work-men.

Much time saved in solicitation for Money.

Appointments made among Men of Business.

Bills dispersed for Publication of any Concern.

Summons or Tickets conveyed to all Parts.

Brewers Entries safely sent to the Excise-Office.

Lawyers and Clients mutually correspond.

Patients send to Doctors, Apothecaries, &c. for what they want.

And the poor Prisoners can now address to their Creditors or Benefactors for One Penny, and save five Pence (out of the former Charge to a Porter) which will pay for a good Dinner.

Many other Conveniencies are to be had by this Conveyance, which (tho for brevities sake are omitted) the Ingenious will find out; whereby may be undeniably demonstrated, the universal Utility of this Invention, and the unreasonableness and invalidity of all the Objections hitherto alledged against it.

It is become a general wonder among the most Intelligent and Men of Business, That Mr. Dockwra (or any other) should be thus sued for Carrying and Re-carrying Letters about London and other Neighbouring Places, when to this day the General Post has not settled any thing of that nature for the convenience of the Inhabitants in any one place round this City nearer than a Stage of 9 or 10 mile; and yet the Informant is for Penalties of 5 l. a Letter and 100 l. a Week for doing that good to the Publick which the General Post Office never did. And by this Invention has so added to the Income of the Post Office, that it was never before so high as since the Penny-Post was set up; that Revenue being now risen from 21500 l. to above 50000 l. per Annum, though the poor Undertakers of the Penny-Post have lost above 10000 l. per Annum out of purse to serve the Publick. But they hope they shall be at quiet in the possession of their own Invention, and that they may be countenanced to carry on the Practice of the Penny-Post whereby they may be enabled to reap the Fruits of their Labour (and great Charge) as a Reward for setting up an Undertaking Manifested to be so useful to all Men, by full Experience,

The True Touch-stone of all Designs.

Note, Upon any Delay or Miscarriage of a Letter, if after such strict inquiry made as aforesaid, there be just ground to charge it on the Penny-Post; 'tis desired that the Party concerned would (by a Line or two) give the Undertakers an account how the Letter was directed, who sent it, at what Penny-post-house it was left, also what day and hour if possible, and the Undertakers, after a strict inquiry into the matter of fact, will return a satisfactory Answer to the said Complaint. And whosoever has occasion, either on this or any other account, to write to the Undertakers; if left at any Penny-Post-House, it will go free and come safe to hand if thus directed,

To Mr. William Dockwra and the rest of the Undertakers,
at the Penny-Post-House in Lime-street.